

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

time busy with the rebellious Kurds but who would certainly have joined the rebellion if junction had been effected. But a more fundamental cause of the failure of both Tabriz revolts was to be sought in their very character: the leadership was not well organized; there was too much discussion among the leaders. The lack of clarity of aims and ideals and also of discipline brought too much confusion, while an exaggerated weight attached to one or another personality, so characteristic of oriental ways, jeopardized the chances of success. On the other hand, the independent artisan type predominated in the rebel ranks. They lacked, therefore, the political and social consciousness of the industrial proletariat and their revolutionary impetus was blunted.¹⁶ This criticism, so typically Marxist, was not unfounded. Moscow had hoped for better results, but the result was a fiasco. One had to draw proper conclusions and avoid the same mistakes in the future.

Reference was earlier made to the "new Khorasan." It is not difficult to see why Reza Khan disliked the idea of having to deal in Azerbaijan with a situation similar to the one in Khorasan. Since 1920 the latter province had been a scene of serious disorder engineered by the Bolsheviks. The capture of Ashkhabad in the fall of 1919, and later of the whole of Transcaspia, was followed by Soviet infiltration, after March, 1920, into the Iranian province of Khorasan. No direct invasion by the Red Army took place, but the stratagem of using a local puppet chieftain was resorted to. This time the choice fell on a Kurdish chief, Khuda Verdi Sardar, whom the Russians instigated to start a revolt against the

Iranians. If his insurrection succeeded, he was then to invite the Red Army to assist him. Large-scale smuggling of arms was undertaken across the frontier, encouraging Khuda Verdi Sardar to conceive grandiose plans for the establishment of his "independent" state. Without Soviet support the movement could not hope to gain a foothold in Khorasan, as the Kurds there constitute an insignificant minority; the most they can do is to molest Iranian authorities by raiding roads and villages. Such an ambitious scheme of attaining independence or even autonomy

ie See A. Vishnegradova, "The Revolutionary Movement in Persian Azerbaijan," *Novy Vostok*, II (1922), 249 ff.